

By: Howard

H.J.R. No. 59

A JOINT RESOLUTION

proposing a constitutional amendment establishing the Texas Redistricting Commission to redistrict the Texas Legislature and Texas congressional districts and revising procedures for redistricting.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Article III, Texas Constitution, is amended by adding Section 28a to read as follows:

Sec. 28a. (a) The Texas Redistricting Commission exercises the legislative authority of this state to adopt redistricting plans for the election of the Texas House of Representatives, the Texas Senate, and the members of the United States House of Representatives elected from this state. Districts for those legislative bodies may not be established or changed except as provided by this section.

(b) The commission consists of seven members selected as follows:

(1) one member appointed by the member of the Texas Senate with the most seniority, as defined by senate rules;

(2) one member appointed by the member of the Texas Senate with the most seniority, as defined by senate rules, who is

of a different political party than the member described by Subdivision (1) of this subsection;

(3) one member appointed by the member of the Texas House of Representatives with the most seniority, as defined by house rules;

(4) one member appointed by the member of the Texas House of Representatives with the most seniority, as defined by house rules, who is of a different political party than the member described by Subdivision (3) of this subsection;

(5) one member appointed by an affirmative vote of not fewer than three of the members of the commission selected under Subdivisions (1) through (4) of this subsection; and

(6) two members appointed by the member appointed under Subdivision (5) of this subsection, who must be retired federal judges appointed to the federal bench by presidents of different political parties.

(c) The member appointed under Subsection (b)(5) of this section serves as presiding officer of the commission.

(d) Each member of the commission must be a resident of this state. A person is not eligible to serve on the commission if the person:

(1) holds an elective or appointive public office, other than the office of retired federal judge if the member is appointed

under Subsection (b)(6) of this section or an office on the governing body of a school district;

(2) holds an office in a political party;

(3) is employed by:

(A) an elected or appointed public official;

(B) a candidate for the legislature or the United States Congress; or

(C) an entity whose principal purpose is to support or oppose a candidate described by Paragraph (B) of this subdivision;

(4) has served in a position described by Subdivision (1), (2), or (3) of this subsection within the three years preceding the date the person is appointed to the commission;

(5) is required by law to register with the Texas Ethics Commission on account of the person's communications with state officers to influence legislation or administrative action, or was required to register in that capacity in the three years preceding the date the person was appointed to the commission; or

(6) is related to an elected or appointed public official within the second degree by consanguinity, as determined under general law governing consanguinity.

(e) The full term of a member of the commission is a 10-year term that begins on February 1 of the year ending in 1 in which the

initial appointment to the position is required to be made and expires on January 31 of the next year ending in 1. A vacancy on the commission is filled in the same manner as provided by this section for the original appointment.

(f) A member of the commission may not be a candidate in an election for the Texas Senate or Texas House of Representatives before the third anniversary of the date the commission adopts a redistricting plan or modification of a plan for that body during the person's service on the commission.

(g) A redistricting plan or modification of a redistricting plan is adopted by a vote of not less than five members of the commission.

(h) The members of the commission appointed under Subsections (b)(1) through (4) of this section shall be appointed not earlier than January 25 or later than January 31 of each year ending in 1.

The member appointed under Subsection (b)(5) of this section shall be appointed not later than the 15th day after the commission convenes under Subsection (i) of this section. The members appointed under Subsection (b)(6) of this section shall be appointed not later than the 15th day after the date of an appointment under Subsection (b)(5) of this section.

(i) The commission shall convene on the first business day after January 31 of each year ending in 1 and shall adopt a

redistricting plan for the Texas Senate, the Texas House of Representatives, and the members of the United States House of Representatives elected from this state not later than July 1 of that year, unless the federal decennial census is delivered to the appropriate officials of this state after May 1 of that year, in which event the commission shall adopt those redistricting plans not later than the 90th day after the date the census is delivered.

(j) The commission shall reconvene to modify a redistricting plan if the plan becomes unenforceable by order of a court or by action of any other appropriate authority. In modifying a redistricting plan, the commission must comply with all applicable standards imposed by this section, other provisions of this constitution, and laws enacted under this section but is not limited to modifications necessary to correct legal deficiencies.

(k) In a redistricting plan or modification of a plan adopted under this section:

(1) each district must be composed of contiguous territory, and for purposes of this subdivision territory that is adjoining only at a point is not considered contiguous;

(2) each congressional district must contain a population as nearly equal as possible to the population of any other district in the plan;

(3) in a legislative redistricting plan the overall

range of population deviation from the district with the largest population to the district with the smallest population may not exceed 2.5 percent;

(4) to the extent reasonable, district boundaries must coincide with the boundaries of political subdivisions of the state and divide the smallest number of counties, municipalities, and school districts possible; and

(5) districts must be drawn in accordance with the federal constitution and all applicable federal laws.

(1) If a political subdivision must be divided, the commission shall give preference to dividing a more populous political subdivision before a less populous one. This subsection does not apply to a boundary drawn along a county line that divides a municipality.

(m) The commission may not draw a redistricting plan purposely to favor or discriminate against a political party or any other group.

(n) The legislature shall enact laws consistent with this section to implement this section. The laws may include additional qualifications for commission members and additional standards applicable to redistricting plans.

(o) The legislature shall appropriate money or otherwise provide the commission sufficient facilities and personnel to

enable the commission to carry out its duties.

(p) This section takes effect January 1, 2023. On that date, the Legislative Redistricting Board is abolished and Section 28 of this article is repealed. The Texas Redistricting Commission shall convene for the first time on the first business day after January 31, 2023. This subsection expires January 1, 2024.

SECTION 2. Section 7a, Article V, Texas Constitution, is amended by amending Subsections (e) and (i) and adding Subsection (j) to read as follows:

(e) Unless the legislature enacts a statewide reapportionment of the judicial districts following each federal decennial census, the board shall convene not later than the first Monday of June of the third year following the year in which the federal decennial census is taken to make a statewide reapportionment of the districts. The board shall complete its work on the reapportionment and file its order with the secretary of state not later than August 31 of the same year. If the Judicial Districts Board fails to make a statewide apportionment by that date, the Texas [~~Legislative~~] Redistricting Commission [~~Board~~] established by Article III, Section 28a [~~28~~], of this constitution shall convene on September 1 of the same year to make a statewide reapportionment of the judicial districts not later than the 90th [~~150th~~] day after the final day for the Judicial Districts Board to make the

reapportionment.

(i) The legislature, the Judicial Districts Board, or the Texas [~~Legislative~~] Redistricting Commission [~~Board~~] may not redistrict the judicial districts to provide for any judicial district smaller in size than an entire county except as provided by this section. Judicial districts smaller in size than the entire county may be created subsequent to a general election where a majority of the persons voting on the proposition adopt the proposition "to allow the division of _____ County into judicial districts composed of parts of _____ County." No redistricting plan may be proposed or adopted by the legislature, the Judicial Districts Board, or the Texas [~~Legislative~~] Redistricting Commission [~~Board~~] in anticipation of a future action by the voters of any county.

(j) Until January 1, 2023, a reference in this section to the Texas Redistricting Commission means the Legislative Redistricting Board established under Article III, Section 28, of this constitution. This subsection expires January 1, 2023.

SECTION 3. This proposed constitutional amendment shall be submitted to the voters at an election to be held November 2, 2021.

The ballot shall be printed to permit voting for or against the following proposition: "The constitutional amendment establishing the Texas Redistricting Commission to redistrict the Texas

Legislature and Texas congressional districts and revising procedures for redistricting."